

MEMORANDUM

TO: City Council

VIA: Richard M. Finn
City Administrator

FROM: Venita Enola George *VEG*
Senior Planner

SUBJECT: Amended Open Space Plan - Phase I
Recommendations for the City of Takoma Park

DATE: January 7, 2000

~~~~~

Takoma Park's Open Space Plan was adopted in 1994, in an effort to provide recommendations for future open space acquisition or other protection. Neighborhoods annexed to the City in 1995 were not evaluated. To ensure that future development complements and enhances existing community networks, efforts have recently been made to evaluate all undeveloped lots located in the annexed areas. To accomplish this task, a citizen committee was organized by City staff. The members include the following citizen volunteers: Ann Hoffnar, Terry Seamens, and Catherine Tunis. Venita Enola George, Senior Planner, staffed the Committee.

The Open Space Committee members met with representatives of the Pine Crest Civic Association and the Citizens Advisory Committee on Economic Development Strategies to discuss the proposed recommendations and other concerns relating to the following properties:

- The Sligo Mills Townes property located on the west side of Sligo Mill Road (between Sheridan Street and 6502 Sligo Mill Road); and,
- The Poplar Mills property located at the intersection of Poplar Avenue, Sligo Mill Road and New Hampshire Avenue.

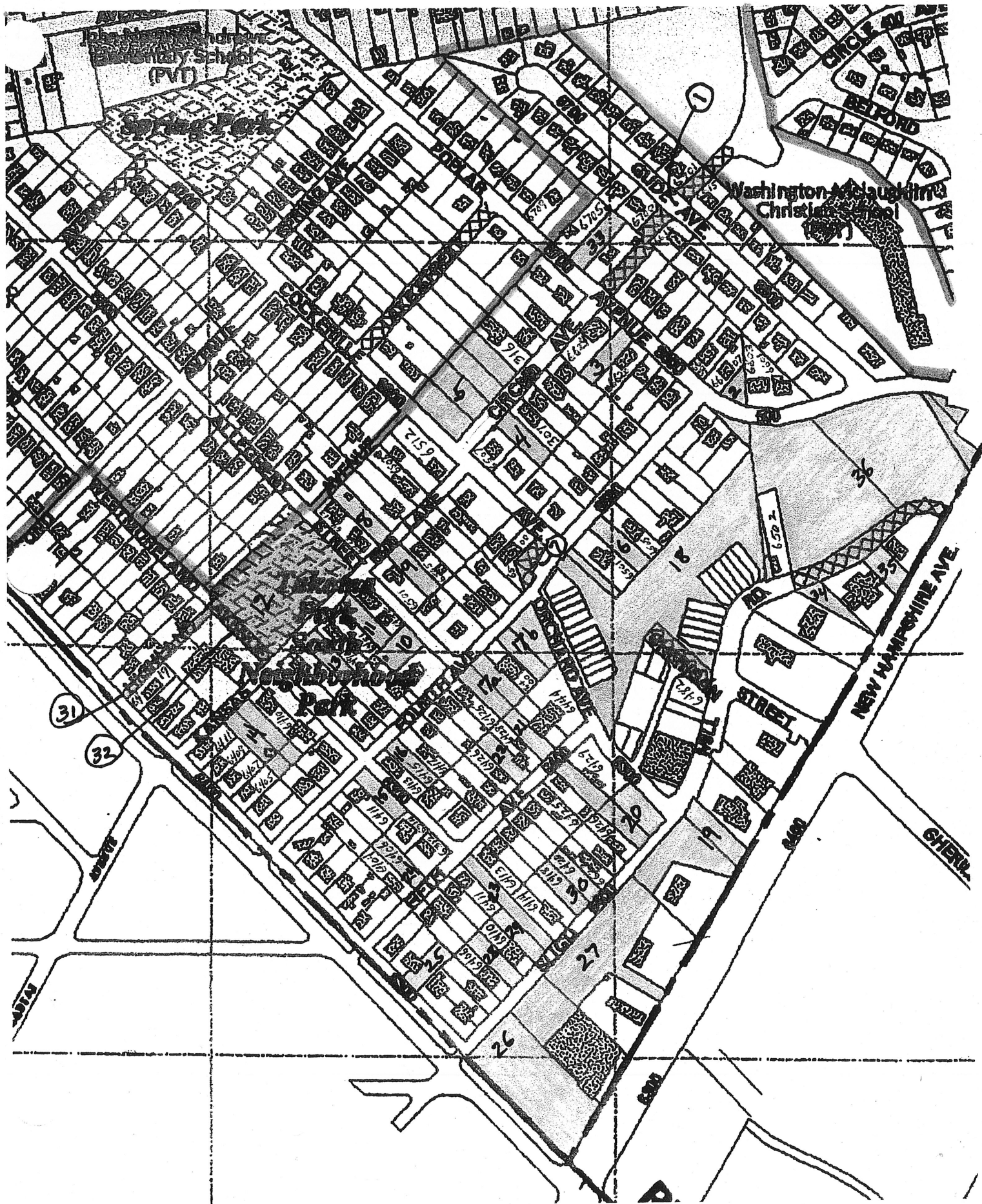
This meeting was scheduled as a result of a re-zoning request in the Master Plan and a submission of a development proposal for the Poplar Mills property. During the meeting we also discussed the recommendation to build a neighborhood park on Mr. Matthews' property which is located at the intersection of Orchard Avenue and Sligo Mill Road (6429 Fifth Avenue). It is important to mention, that the groups' opinions regarding the use of the areas under review for re-zoning were not in complete concurrence.

- Maintaining the residential nature of the neighboring community by mitigating the level of air and noise pollution often generated by commercial and vehicular activity;
- Implementing measures that protect sensitive environmental and natural resources; and,
- Implementing measures that protect the existing perennial stream by modifying the standard Montgomery County stream buffer for this area while enhancing economic development along the New Hampshire Avenue corridor.

Attached for your review are the following documents:

- A colored map identifying each study area by number;
- The Open Space Committee Report (including preliminary recommendations which are subject to change due to further research);
- The consolidated version of the Open Space Individual Site Evaluation report;
- Correspondence regarding funding assistance;
- Remarks from the Pine Crest Civic Association;
- Remarks from the Citizens Advisory Committee on Economic Development Strategies; and,
- Remarks from Vinod Goel, the owner of the office building located at 6530 New Hampshire Avenue, Takoma Park, Maryland.

Attachments



# **PROPOSED OPEN SPACE PLAN - PHASE I**

## **Committee Members**

Ann Hoffnar  
Terry Seamens  
Catherine Tunis  
Venita Enola George - City Staff

## **Open Space Committee Goal**

The goal of the Committee is to evaluate undeveloped land in the annexed neighborhoods, to identify the properties that should be acquired for open space preservation, and to determine which of these lots are suitable for conservation easements. In an effort to achieve this goal the new Open Space Committee did the following:

- Conducted field observations and prepared an open space inventory of the vacant properties ( see appendix A);
- Prepared recommendations based on each site's environmental and natural resources identified on the sites as well as other factors that affect the suitability of each site for open space or for development; and,
- Provided zoning recommendations for sites not meeting the criteria for open space preservation.

## **The Methodology and Criteria for Selection**

The following methodology was used to locate and evaluate undeveloped properties that are located in the annexed areas of Takoma Park:

- Developed a list of all privately - owned, undeveloped sites with property land area greater than or equal to 4,000 square feet. This list was compiled using computer records from the Maryland Department of Assessments and Taxation - Real Property System.
- Located all of these properties on a City map and numbered
- Distributed site evaluation forms to each member of the Open Space Committee prior to conducting the field observation.
- Ensured that each site was inspected by each member of the Open Space Committee.
- entered site evaluation information into a database in order to track all properties.
- Using the database, created a net list of all the sites by eliminating all properties

- Average potential for development: regulatory authority does not provide adequate protection of property in its natural condition
- High potential for development: property is not protected in its natural condition, and the current owner has expressed a desire to sell or develop property in near future, or property is slated for immediate development.

### **Preliminary Recommendations**

#### **General Recommendation:**

To protect watersheds and natural features, to supplement the existing park network, and to create buffers in order to maintain the residential nature of the adjacent communities while promoting economic development in the Unification Area of Takoma Park.

#### **Sites Recommended for Public Acquisition to Preserve as Open Space**

Site No. : 18

Name of Site/Location: Sligo Mills

##### **Justification:**

- To preserve the exceptional environmental values of this naturally wooded area located from the Sligo Mills Road side to the rear of the properties that face 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue.
- To protect the extremely rare and large cherry and sassafras trees, as well as the many other native trees throughout the site;
- To protect the watershed and its naturally wooded conditions;
- To protect existing wildlife habitat
- To mitigate the level of air and noise pollution in an effort to protect the residential communities from the commercial activity and vehicular traffic on New Hampshire Avenue (MD 650)
- To preserve the climate change and mitigation services of the existing trees
- To provide the neighborhood additional passive recreational opportunities like hiking trails and wildlife observation.

Site No. : 20

Name of Site/Location: 6429 Fifth Avenue (corner of Sligo Mills Road/Orchard Avenue)

Justification: To provide the residents of the Pine Crest neighborhood with active recreational opportunities that accommodates both a

upland portions of the site. The City and Planning Board need to carefully consider what type of development, if any, is appropriate for this site. Any development must bring desirable, sustainable activity to the area. If re-zoned at all, commercial zoning should be granted only for developable area, not the entire property. Neighboring residents are strongly opposed to re-zoning from residential to commercial. Previous site plans had designated a large portion of this site to conservation easement.

It would not be appropriate for the City to abandon the paper street without appropriate compensation, if at all, and consideration of this issue should include future expectations of City services.

While this site would be a low priority for acquisition for open space due to its severe environmental ( including an abundance of invasive exotic plants) and topography problems, it does provide some environmental services, especially due to the tree cover.

### **Improvement Suggestions**

Site Nos : 19, 26, and 27

Name of Site/Location: Green space behind 6300, 6350, and 6500 New Hampshire Avenue (Trak Auto, Popeyes Carry-out, and Gas Station)

Suggestion: Maintain green space in the rear of businesses to serve as a buffer between residential community and commercial activity

Site No.: 14

Name of Site/Location: 6405, 6407, and 6411 Eastern Avenue

Suggestion: City determine boundary lines of residential property to ensure that available green space is not underutilized

Site No.: 31

Name of Site/Location: Between 6501 and 6419 Eastern Avenue

Suggestion: City should improve the pedestrian path connecting to the Takoma Park South Neighborhood Park

Site No.: 12

Name of site/Location: Takoma Park South Neighborhood Park